PREFACE.

With the closing month of 1849, we conclude the First Volume of the Ragged School Union Magazine. Before we commence the labours of another year, and standing, as we do, between the past and the future, it may not be without its use briefly to glance at both.

Were it our province to chronicle the passing events of nations, or to float our feeble bark on the rough ocean of party politics, we might be tempted to dwell for a moment on the upheavings of empires, and the noise of wars and tumults—the echoes of which have scarcely yet died away—and to notify the signs of the times, as indicated by the treble march of the famine, the war, and the pestilence. But this is not our mission, nor the sphere of action which we have chosen, although it has a direct bearing upon all these, and lies at the very basis of our nation's welfare. Our work is to gather the scattered portions of forlorn and destitute humanity, as they wander homeless and friendless in the world, or lie prostrate in the fœtid lanes and alleys of our great cities, and to tell the world of their wants and claims. We seek to show, that much of the honour and prosperity of our country depends upon the observance of a due economy in the disposal of *all* her children, and that not even one of the most ragged and destitute can be lost, through ignorance and neglect, without robbing the nation of a portion of its wealth, and casting a stain on its dignity and honour. To promote the elevation of the destitute poor, by means of education and other needful appliances, have our pages been almost exclusively devoted. We have endeavoured to encourage the labourer in his work—the wealthy to give of their substance—and to enlist the sympathy and assistance of all Christians, on behalf of a cause which must find an approval in every benevolent heart, and which our God has been pleased so signally to bless. During the past year nearly *sixty thousand* copies of the Magazine have been circulated among all classes of Christians, including a large portion of the nobility and gentry of our land, each containing some new record of our proceedings, and important facts connected with the welfare and condition of our neglected poor. Nor can we believe that we have been engaged in unproductive labour, although in many instances the fruit may not be apparent. To produce a permanent record of valuable facts

is itself important; but to enlist a practical sympathy, and guide it into a proper course of action, has been still more our aim, while seeking to further the great work of moral reformation. It has been our pleasing duty throughout the year to record, though not a rapid, yet a steady progress. New friends have been added to the cause—new schools have been established—and many of those that previously existed have been greatly extended, and increased in efficiency and usefulness. The success of the Emigration Scheme has also been tested, and notwithstanding the objections that have been raised against it, has proved itself worthy of the attention of the country, as well as the support of the Government.

Those who have searched our pages for subjects merely of common interest or amusement, have no doubt been disappointed; for instead of imaginary evils, we have had to deal with the solemn and stern realities of life. We have sought the promotion of a great work, and because of this the matter has been more of an exclusive character.

Our labours in future will be directed to the same end, although in the selection of subjects we may embrace a wider range, including the efforts of societies and individuals for improving the social and domestic condition of the poor, and such other means as are used for the furtherance of this common object. Knowing how true it is that "the iniquities of the fathers are visited upon the children," and thereby transmitted to succeeding generations, we hope to extend the range of our observations beyond the school-room, and bring to light many of those secondary causes that are at work, corrupting our population, and sinking them deeper in the scale of moral and social depravity.

But as those causes are not all floating on the surface, nor always apparent to a cursory observer, a greater amount of labour will therefore be necessary, and this induces us to invite the co-operation and assistance of all our friends. Contributions, written in a *spirit* and *style* suited to our pages, containing important facts on any of the subjects at which we have hinted, and showing their bearing on the evils we seek to remove, will be gratefully received and meet with due attention, if characterized by accuracy, terseness, and brevity.

Thus, having indicated the course we mean to pursue during the coming year, we entreat the assistance of all those who have at heart the cause of the poor and the helpless, urging them to action by the command, and encouraging them to perseverance by the promise of God when he says, "Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.—And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

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